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Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8184th meeting

Tuesday, 20 February 2018, 3 p.m.

New York

President:	Sheikh Al Sabah	(Kuwait)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Dah
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Ms. Guadey
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Tileuberdi
	Netherlands	Mrs. Gregoire Van Haaren
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Clay
	United States of America	Mr. Miller

Agenda

The situation concerning Iraq

Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2018/40)

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2367 (2017) (S/2018/42)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted

The situation concerning Iraq

Seventeenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013) (S/2018/40)

Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2367 (2017) (S/2018/42)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Iraq to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/40, which contains the seventeenth report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 4 of Security Council resolution 2107 (2013), as well as to document S/2018/42, which contains the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2367 (2017).

I now give the floor to Mr. Kubiš.

Mr. Kubiš: This Security Council meeting is taking place just days after the Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, so generously co-hosted by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, thereby showing once again his and his country's commitment to the humanitarian, peace and development cause in the region and in the world. The Conference was attended by more than 70 Member States and international organizations and 2,000 private-sector companies. It mobilized nearly $30 billion to support reconstruction. That massive regional and international response is extraordinary proof of the continuous solidarity with, and confidence in, the Government and the people of Iraq. In his concluding remarks, the Secretary-General stated,

> "[i]n a world where unfortunately good news is scarce, and in the region where unfortunately we see many situations getting worse, the fact that Iraq is on the right track and the fact that the international community has shown its confidence in Iraq is a very important piece of good news."

As the security forces continue to clear out remnants of Da'esh, Iraq is increasingly focusing on the upcoming parliamentary elections on 12 May. Many Iraqi political forces decided to form cross-sectarian, cross-ethnic coalitions across the political spectrum. It is indeed essential that the elections will confirm the vision of Iraqis working together across the sectarian and ethnic divides in pursuit of the needed political, economic and social reforms based on the principles of citizenship with equal rights, justice and opportunity for all and good governance, devoid of the compromised quota system and corruption. Only a new Government, based on such approach, will guarantee the future of Iraq as a united, democratic, fully sovereign and independent federal State and as a factor of stability, cooperation and prosperity for its people and the region.

The Independent High Electoral Commission has steadily continued its preparations for the parliamentary elections. The Commission has registered 205 political parties, and 27 political coalitions have been approved to contest the elections. Yet a number of challenges remain. The voluntary and dignified return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), under conditions of safety and security, is an critical issue for the success and credibility of the elections. In the months ahead, the Government expects that as many as 2 million of the 2.5 million who are still displaced will return home. I am also encouraged by the decision of the Government to establish voluntary return committees with humanitarian representatives in each governorate to oversee the return process.

The Iraqi security forces providing an environment of security, which would enable voters to exercise their right to vote in safety, free from terror and fear of intimidation, is an overriding concern. Although Da'esh's so-called caliphate has been defeated, the terrorist organization and its sleeper cells, including among IDPs, continue to pose a threat. On 18 February, in the course of a counter-terrorism operation in Hawija and surrounding areas, a special force from the popular mobilization forces was ambushed and over 20 fighters were martyred.

In addition, the new electronic ballot counting system, including the customization and development of the software for results tabulation, continues to be a work in progress and requires accelerated support, including from the United Nations and other international partners, in order to ensure the envisaged enhanced integrity and credibility of the elections. Observation of the elections, both domestic and international, will be a vital component in fostering credibility and acceptance of the results. I strongly urge domestic observer groups, as well as the international community, to participate in observing the elections, and the international community in providing the necessary support. Credible and acceptable elections with high voter turnout, including in the liberated areas and in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, with specific measures to facilitate women's participation, will empower the new Government to implement reforms, improve accountability and promote inclusiveness and reconciliation among various components and groups in Iraq.

I am encouraged by the recent positive developments in relations between Baghdad and Erbil. Prime Minister Al Abadi confirmed days ago that the federal and regional Governments are in the final stages of negotiations with regard to some concrete areas that would address urgent needs and concerns of the people of the region, beginning with the payment of salaries and the re-opening of the airports in Erbil and Suleimaniyah. Such steps are urgently needed.

I commend the Iraqi federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government for their concerted efforts and strong coordination aimed at the implementation of the national action plan on women and peace and security. With elections looming, we urge Iraqi senior political leaders to broaden women's political space and appoint them to leadership positions within political parties, as well as ensure their meaningful participation in all electoral processes, including participating in negotiations leading to the Government's formation following the holding of national elections.

I welcome the Government's willingness to work with the United Nations country task force on monitoring and reporting to develop an action plan to address violations committed against children in times of conflict. To that end, Prime Minister Al Abadi has endorsed the establishment of the national inter-ministerial senior committee for monitoring and reporting on children affected by the armed conflict.

The Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization (FFIS) of the United Nations Development Programme has continued to scale-up its efforts to stabilize newly liberated areas of Iraq. The FFIS is now cleared to work in 31 of the more than 40 cities and districts that have been liberated by Iraqi security forces. Since we last reported to the Security Council (see S/PV.8112), 360 projects have either been completed or are under development, thereby bringing the total number of stabilization projects to 1,887. In Mosul alone, nearly 600 stabilization projects are under way.

Despite the strong support demonstrated by Kuwait and the commitment to its international and humanitarian obligations shown by Iraq, the full normalization of relations will take place only once all outstanding issues concerning Kuwaiti missing persons and property have been resolved. The Government of Iraq, in particular its Ministry of Defence, is making proactive efforts to re-animate the search for missing Kuwaiti persons. I deeply regret that the past 13 years have not yielded tangible results. During the latest meeting of the tripartite mechanism, which took place on 6 February in Kuwait, tripartite members meaningfully acknowledged the review project of the International Committee of the Red Cross that would serve to streamline and prioritize work, re-orient activities and guide the mechanism.

I would like to take this opportunity to call on the international community to consider ways in which it could support the search for missing Kuwaiti persons, including through the procurement of field equipment and providing forensic, DNA and anthropological training and capacity-building for the Iraqi and Kuwaiti technical teams. Those Member States in possession of satellite imagery from 1990-1991 are particularly encouraged to come forward and provide analysis and information that could help in identifying burial sites to the Government of Iraq. I also reiterate my call on Iraq and Kuwait to come to an agreement on the swift repatriation of located Kuwaiti academic textbooks that have been awaiting an official handover for more than a year.

In conclusion, allow me to take this opportunity to thank my outgoing Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General, who is also Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq and Resident

Representative of the United Nations Development Programme, Ms. Lise Grande, for the truly outstanding work in her over three years in Iraq. When we praise major achievements in the areas of stabilization and when we applaud the hard work and significant outcomes achieved in the humanitarian area, including the civilian-military cooperation that succeeded so well in the protection and for the benefit of the affected civilian population, notably during the Mosul liberation campaign, we need first of all to recognize the leadership and achievements of Deputy Special Representative Grande, who, together with her colleagues, made it happen.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Kubiš for his briefing.

I shall now make a statement in my capacity as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait.

First of all, I would like to highly commend the efforts of the United Nations in assisting the Government and the people of Iraq at such a sensitive and difficult juncture, in particular following the liberation of all Iraqi territories from Da'esh. I also thank the United Nations for its work and coordination through the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) with the Iraqi Government pursuant to resolution 2367 (2017). I reiterate as well Kuwait's support for Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of UNAMI, and his Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs in Iraq, Ms. Alice Walpole. We also appreciate the work of her predecessor, Mr. Busztin.

I once again congratulate the Government and the people of Iraq on their historic victory in liberating their territories from Da'esh. At the same time, we highly commend the sacrifices of our brotherly Iraqi people, which embody the ideal of heroism in combating terrorism. We hope that the Iraqi Government will successfully hold accountable perpetrators of these criminal acts, in coordination and cooperation with the international mechanism pursuant to resolution 2379 (2017), in order to strengthen the country's relevant national judicial capacities.

We recognize the challenges facing Iraq following the defeat of Da'esh. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called for holding an international conference on the reconstruction of Iraq, which took place in Kuwait last week. It was co-hosted by Kuwait, the Republic of Iraq, the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank, and aimed at helping Iraq overcome its current sensitive and critical phase. Pledges at the conference amounted to almost $30 billion from participating States, the private sector and civil society organizations. They were made in the form of investment loans and credit facilities that would improve the livelihoods of Iraqis, develop infrastructure and provide the basic services needed to establish a secure environment in the liberated areas of Iraq. The State of Kuwait announced its contribution of $1 billion in the form of loans within the framework of the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development, and an additional $1 billion earmarked for investing in projects in Iraq. Two years ago Kuwait also contributed more than $200 million in voluntary assistance at the governmental and public levels in response to the humanitarian impact caused by Da'esh's invasion of Iraq. Last week, Kuwait also hosted the ministerial meeting of the Global Coalition to Defeat Da'esh to ensure the ongoing coordination of international counter-terrorism efforts and the implementation of the strategy developed by the Coalition to put an end to that criminal organization.

With regard to international obligations and humanitarian issues related to missing Kuwaiti citizens and third parties, as well as missing Kuwaiti property, including the national archives, we will continue to honour our obligations and monitor the periodic reports of the Secretary-General and the briefings of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq, pursuant to paragraph 4 of resolution 2107 (2013). I again call upon everyone to make a greater effort, devise an innovative approach to meet obligations with regard to Kuwait in order to make progress on the issue, given the importance and historic value of such archives, in accordance with resolution 2107 (2013), and end the suffering of the families of prisoners and of those who have been missing for more than 27 years.

In conclusion, we hope that cooperation will continue in the same amicable spirit with Iraq. We would like to honour the remaining obligations of the tripartite mechanism and its technical committee headed by the International Committee of the Red Cross, according to the relevant Security Council resolutions, with the aim of achieving substantial and tangible results. I would again like to commend the efforts of UNAMI. We reiterate that we will cooperate fully with UNAMI in order to complete its mandate to the fullest.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I shall now give the floor to those other Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to welcome Sheikh Sabah Khalid Al Hamad Al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait, who is presiding over today's meeting of the Security Council. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing. We appreciate and support his efforts in carrying our the duties entrusted to him. Similarly, my delegation thanks UNAMI for its important and outstanding efforts in discharging its mandate. We encourage it to continue to foster dialogue and coordinate efforts to strengthen the process for peace and reconciliation in Iraq.

We begin by commending the Iraqi security forces on their victory over Da'esh, which was announced by Iraq's Prime Minister, Mr. Haider Al Abadi, on 9 December 2017. We reiterate our sincere gratitude to the Iraqi security forces and to the entire Iraqi population for their courage, sacrifice and resolute fight against terrorism on our behalf. That significant achievement should lead to greater unity among all sectors in society. To that end, political actors and the Government must focus on eliminating sectarian and divisive rhetoric, and call for unity and reconciliation in an effort to achieve stability and reconstruction in Iraq.

In addition, we underscore that, in line with the mandate outlined in resolution 2379 (2017), the Secretary-General and the Government of Iraq agreed on the terms of reference to establish an investigative team to determine those responsible for atrocities committed by Da'esh and bring them to justice before Iraqi courts. We firmly believe that the establishment of an investigative team, led by a special adviser, is crucial to combat impunity, make amends to the victims and bolster reconciliation efforts.

Similarly, amid efforts to rebuild Iraq, we underscore Kuwait's support and willingness to cooperate, as demonstrated by its hosting of the International Conference for Reconstruction of Iraq on 12 to 14 February. We hope that the pledges will improve the plight of the Iraqi people by prioritizing their development, stability and prosperity. Nonetheless, in spite of such progress, we regret that asymmetrical attacks that claim the lives of innocent civilians still occur. During the reporting period, at least 108 people were killed and more than 240 wounded, including women and children. The plight of more then 1,500 Yazidi women and children still under the control of Da'esh remains a concern that must be addressed as soon as possible.

We take note of the electoral calendar adopted by the Council of Representatives. We hope that the legislation and legal mechanisms required for the electoral process in May this year will be developed in a participatory and inclusive manner by and for Iraqis, with a view to holding orderly, peaceful and transparent elections. We believe that we must step up efforts to ensure the dignified and safe voluntary return of more than 6 million internally displaced persons, and enable them to return to their homes, regain control of their lives and participate freely in the electoral process.

The clearing and removal of explosive remnants of war is essential, as the security of the population is indispensable to the process of reconstruction. Once again, we underscore the efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service in Iraq. We call upon the international community to support its work and unite efforts to effectively implement resolution 2365 (2017).

With regard to efforts conducted by Iraq to identify areas where mass graves might be located and to recover and return Kuwaiti property, we take note of the remains founds in Basra and Najaf, and we the support role of the International Committee of the Red Cross. We call upon the international community to provide support to build capacity within the Iraqi Government to identify mass graves and increase and enhance technical skills for improved forensic testing.

Finally, we encourage the parties involved to redouble their efforts to deliver tangible results and give continuity to the process of reconciliation in Iraq and Kuwait.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Ján Kubiš, has just provided a succinct briefing to update us on the situation in Iraq and the latest developments there. We thank him for his briefing and excellent work in Iraq as Head of UNAMI. Likewise, we congratulate the entire UNAMI team.

As the report of the Secretary-General pursuant to resolution 2367 (2017) (S/2018/42) highlights, on 9 December last year the Government of Iraq declared victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This turn of events put an end to several years of indescribable indignity committed against the Iraqi population by this terrorist group, which during its occupation starting in 2015 came to control two thirds of the territory of Iraq, committing atrocities of every stripe, with thousands of deaths, millions of internally displaced persons, the massive levelling of all types of infrastructure and the destruction of the economic fabric of the country.

As this is the first time I have taken the floor on the situation in Iraq, I would like, on behalf of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea, on the one hand, to express our congratulations to the Iraqi Government and the coalition of forces of the international community that made the defeat of ISIL and the total liberation of Iraqi territory possible, and, on the other hand, to demonstrate to the Government and the people of Iraq the solidarity of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea in the face of the enormous loss of human life and for all the atrocities and suffering that group inflicted on the Iraqi population as a whole. The Republic of Equatorial Guinea also commends the unity of the Iraqi people, which has greatly contributed to this victory.

Furthermore, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea welcomes the convening in Kuwait of the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq a few days ago, with the aim of obtaining the necessary funds to undertake the reconstruction of the country. In this regard, we commend Kuwait for its support and the decisive role it has played in holding this conference, at which donors pledged to disburse some $30 billion for the commencement of this reconstruction work. To this end, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea calls on the international community to show great solidarity with the Government of Iraq by supporting it in the arduous task of completely rebuilding the country.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea commends and greatly appreciates the two-year initiative launched by Secretary-General António Guterres at the donor conference — the Iraq Recovery and Resilience Programme — to address the country's many challenges. One of these challenges is the persistent tension between the central Government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, as well as the constant risk that ISIL may continue to launch attacks such as the one that took place in northern Baghdad on 13 January. Faced with these situations, we appeal to the Government and the people of Iraq to remain united, overcome their differences and remain vigilant, so that the victory achieved over ISIL is irreversible.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea believes that the greatest challenges now facing the Government and the Iraqi people are the holding of the parliamentary elections on 12 May and the resolution of the very worrying humanitarian situation in the country and the human rights situation, as expressed by Ms. Agnès Callamard following her visit to Iraq in November last year and by Ms. Liz Throssell, spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights during the presentation of her report on 15 December 2017.

I conclude by expressing the hope that the international community in general and the United Nations in particular will resolutely support the Government and the people of Iraq in overcoming all the foregoing challenges, in order to completely normalize the situation in the country, so that the next legislative elections can be held in an atmosphere of peace and unity for all Iraqis.

Mr. Tileuberdi (Kazakhstan): We highly appreciate the comprehensive update by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš. Kazakhstan values highly the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq aimed at promoting political dialogue and reconciliation. We also appreciate the efforts of the entire United Nations system aimed at providing critical services to the population of Iraq.

We welcome the initiative of the State of Kuwait aimed at providing financial assistance for the post-war regional reconstruction in Iraq. In this context, Kazakhstan welcomed the holding in Kuwait of the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq following its liberation from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from 12 to 14 February. The international community's generous financial pledges and contributions at that conference, designed to rebuild Iraq, gives us hope for a better future for the Iraqi people, who survived terrible adversity during the recent war.

We support the decision of the Iraqi Government to hold national and provincial council elections on 12 May, which will help democracy, State-building processes, consolidation of the Constitution and the

introduction of reforms by fully including all ethnic and religious groups, especially those in the northern regions of the country. Indeed, reducing violence in the liberated territories is very significant politically. At the same time, we call for the participation of all Iraqi citizens in determining the future of their country, particularly in the forthcoming parliamentary electoral campaign and the elections that will follow.

Kazakhstan welcomes the inter-Iraqi agreements to extend the ceasefire regime until the parties agree on the joint management of disputed territories, including border points. We trust that the Government and the local authorities located in the northern part of the country will conduct a constructive dialogue that rejects military action. We stand for more meetings, such as the one held on 20 January between Haider Al Abadi, Prime Minister of Iraq, and Nechirvan Barzani, head of the Regional Government of Iraqi Kurdistan. We consider very useful and timely the Special Representative of the Secretary-General's meetings in January and February with political leaders in Baghdad and Erbil in order to bring the positions of the parties closer.

We are heartened to learn that civilian returns to Iraq's newly accessible areas continue to increase since the conclusion of major counter-ISIL military operations late last year. We are pleased that Mosul, Tal Afar, Al-Hawija, Akashat, Al-Qaim and Rawah were liberated from the Islamic State, while western Anbar province will come completely under Government control. These trends indicate the need for the counter-terrorism mechanisms in Iraq to be enhanced and for security measures at the borders to be strengthened. We consider it expedient that, under the leadership of an ad hoc committee headed by the Prime Minister of Iraq, the transfer of all weapons arsenals of various small tribes and other armed groups operating internally in the country be organized. Accordingly, it is necessary to disband all armed groups so as to prevent further internal political conflicts and favour a move towards stability.

Lastly, we must unhesitatingly endorse and mobilize support for Special Representative's commitment to engaging with all sectors and communities of Iraqi society in order to advance inclusive political dialogue even further. Finally, we also need to improve the delivery of public services, laying the foundations for Statehood, peace, progress and national development in a post-ISIL Iraq.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait for presiding over today's meeting and extend our appreciation to Mr. Ján Kubiš for his briefing on the situation in Iraq.

Peru is closely following developments in Iraq and welcomes the losses inflicted on Da'esh and its expulsion from the country. We commend the support displayed by broad segments of Iraqi society and stress the importance of international support, in particular that of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), in attaining this important objective. Nevertheless, as stated in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/42), there is a need to remain vigilant as to potential terrorist regroupings and fresh terrorist attacks. We regret that in November and December 2017 terrorists were able to take more than 60 lives. We highlight the need to promote the rule of law and to ensure accountability for the atrocities committed by Da'esh, in line with resolution 2379 (2017), adopted by the Council last September.

We support United Nations efforts to facilitate dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil. This new phase should be strengthened and translate into a fluid, complementary relationship between the federal Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government. We believe it necessary to continue to strengthen and sustain peace in all its aspects, which means that we must rebuild the country and especially strengthen its institutions, in particular its capacity to defend itself, provide security and protect the human rights of its people.

To that end, it is therefore critical that there be an increase in professional civilian staff across all regions of the country, which would help the process of national decentralization. It is also important to tackle corruption and to promote tolerance and reconciliation, as well as work towards the socioeconomic development of the country and the establishment of initiatives and investment and development projects that offer opportunities for all Iraqis, especially its young people.

In this connection, we welcome initiatives such as the United Nations recovery and resilience programme in support of the national development plan launched by the Secretary-General, and the recent international conference convened by Kuwait at which pledges of $30 billion were made to rebuild Iraq. These initiatives point to the growing confidence of the international

community in the future of the country. We believe, therefore, that we must continue to build on this so that we can effectively address the needs of the 3.4 million persons in highly vulnerable situations and the 3.2 million internally displaced persons.

We eagerly await the national elections slated for 12 May and believe it is key to ensure that all citizens participate, especially women and youth, and that internally displaced persons can vote too. We must ensure the credibility and transparency of the process and of the technology to be used.

In all of the areas I mentioned, UNAMI must continue to provide advice and assistance to the Government and the people of Iraq. Peru supports the recommendations made by the external advisory team, which recently proposed a new operational framework and a more efficient use of the Mission's resources that is commensurate with its functions.

We therefore support the work of Special Representative of the Secretary-General Ján Kubiš and his entire team. My country continue to follow closely the Iraqi process, which we believe will continue on this path, which has enabled it to overcome the Da'esh terrorist threat.

Mr. Dah (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes, like other speakers, to thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), for his high-quality briefing on the situation in Iraq.

Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the proclamation by the Iraqi Government of its army's victory over the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant after several years of fierce combat. We further welcome the decisive support of the international coalition for the Iraqi army, which made it possible to overcome the Da'esh terrorist group, which posed a genuine threat to international peace and security.

My country hopes that the international mobilization that made possible the rout of the Islamic State in Iraq will continue so as to support reconstruction and rebuilding efforts in the country. In this regard, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the holding from 12 to 14 February of an international conference for the reconstruction of Iraq and expresses its gratitude to the Kuwaiti authorities for this laudable initiative.

We further welcome the momentum gained as well as the considerable pledges announced by States, development funds and other international non-governmental organizations for the rebuilding and recovery of Iraq. We applaud in particular the launch during the conference by the Secretary-General, Mr. António Guterres, of the United Nations recovery and resilience programme for Iraq and expresses its support for the nine key areas of action set forth in the programme.

The time has come for the Iraqi Government, with the assistance of the international community, to seek to bring about a lasting peace in the country through credible democratic institutions and an inclusive national reconciliation process. My country also is of the view that everything possible needs to be done to facilitate the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons. This requires expedited efforts to rebuild in conflict-affected areas and the establishment of basic administrative and social services.

My delegation is of the view that all stakeholders in Iraq must, in an atmosphere of calm, set the stage for the peaceful conduct of inclusive, democratic legislative elections on 12 May. We welcome the deployment in Iraq of an electoral needs assessment mission to assist in priority areas of action where the United Nations can provide support. We also thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his good offices vis-à-vis women's representation and participation in political and electoral processes and in the reconciliation efforts under way.

My delegation remains troubled at the security level by the sporadic asymmetrical attacks staged by the Da'esh terrorist group, which retains a considerable capacity to do harm. It exhorts the international community to support the Iraqi Government so as to do away with this residual terrorism and provide the Iraqi people with the conditions for lasting stability and security.

Côte d'Ivoire also encourages the Iraqi authorities to launch the security-sector reform programme to ensure that there are professional security forces who will respect the rule of law and human rights.

Finally, my delegation calls upon the Iraqi authorities to duly consider the UNAMI-supported draft law on the creation of a specialized court for international crimes committed in Iraq. We also commend the Mission and encourage the Special Representative to persevere in

his efforts to win support for the reconstruction of Iraq and the strengthening of its institutions.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to the representative of Iraq.

Mr. Bahr Aluloom (Iraq) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to congratulate the sisterly State of Kuwait on its assumption of the presidency of the Security Council this month and to thank it for its efforts. I also thank the Republic of Kazakhstan for its efforts during its presidency last month. In addition, I highly appreciate the efforts deployed by the outgoing countries Ukraine, Japan, Italy, Egypt, Uruguay and Senegal. I also wish every success to The State of Kuwait, the Netherlands, Poland, Peru, Equatorial Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire. We hope to cooperate with these countries during their term in the Council to achieve the common interests of all States Members of the United Nations.

I wish also to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), Mr. Ján Kubiš, for his briefing and for the efforts he has undertaken together with his team.

The security forces of all categories were able to establish their full dominance on the international Iraqi-Syrian border, from the Al-Walid border crossing to the Rabia border crossing, and managed to liberate Mosul and Ramadi islands and establish full control over all areas along the border with Syria. The whole of Iraqi territory has thus been freed from the grip of Da'esh terrorist factions. Iraq is now at the threshold of a new phase that will involve implementing comprehensive Government reforms on the political, economic and social fronts.

The Government and people pf Iraq would like to thank all the States that have participated in the international coalition, particularly the United States and the European Union countries, as well as all the friendly countries that were not part of the coalition but have combated terrorism, supplied Iraq's security forces with military and logistical support and worked in coordination with them while respecting our country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. These national and international efforts have achieved historic victory over those criminal factions.

One of the priorities of the Government of Iraq is building a lasting peace, which is a challenge that is as significant as that of guaranteeing our citizens a decent living. Iraq belongs to the Iraqi people, regardless of their affiliation or views. The Government has adopted a national strategy for an interfaith dialogue that is founded on the principles of civil harmony and fostering unity among Iraqis which have helped us to achieve a historic victory against Da'esh terrorist factions.

In order to respond to the Iraqi people's desire to succeed in the international campaign to bring Da'esh to justice for the crimes it has committed in Iraq, in particular genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, Iraq, through negotiations with the United Nations Secretariat and with the help of friendly states, has been able to put together an acceptable mandate that ensures full respect for its sovereignty and jurisdiction in the task of collecting criminal evidence for crimes committed by Da'esh. We hope to see a head appointed for this team, in accordance with the mandate, and we call on Member States to provide it with short- and long-term financial and logistical support.

With the aim of rebuilding our liberated cities and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, which will enable us to significantly improve our citizens' daily lives and tackle our development challenges, the relevant Iraqi authorities, together with our partners from the international organizations, have formulated many plans and strategies we need to make progress in the post-Da'esh phase in Iraq, most important of which is the national development and poverty reduction plans 2018-2022, a strategy for eradicating slums in Iraq, a plan for a social development fund and a strategy for developing the private sector 2015-2030.

We are also putting together a national framework document for the reconstruction of liberated cities 2018-2027. Our National Development Plan 2018-2022 is characterized by including new concepts such as promoting administrative decentralization; the revitalization of the private sector; focus on human capital; economic recovery; investment in the education and health sectors and the provision of basic services; the empowerment of women and young people and of vulnerable groups and their involvement in the country's economic life; and job creation for the very poor and support for small and medium enterprises.

The Iraqi Government expects the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) to play a vital role in establishing mechanisms that will coordinate the efforts of all United Nations agencies operating in

Iraq, especially in the areas of assistance, the sharing of expertise and social and economic capacity-building, which directly affect our citizens' daily lives. The Mission's work during post-Da'esh phase must respond to the challenges, circumstances and needs of the Iraqi people. My Government believes that the Mission can play a coordinating role focusing on the following pressing issues: first, promoting good governance, strengthening administrative institutions, fighting corruption and improving the country's economic growth and diversification; secondly, tackling environmental issues, addressing sandstorms in Iraq and providing high-quality essential services; thirdly, investment in human capital and reducing youth unemployment; fourthly, delivering humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons and enabling them to return to their liberated cities; and fifthly, rebuilding cities liberated from Da'esh, assisting the victims of terrorism and combating violent extremism.

With regard to the report of the independent review, after studying the summary submitted by the United Nations pertaining to the team's recommendations for the Mission's new mandate, the Government of Iraq believes that those recommendations do not distinguish between the Mission's political mandate, which permits it to respond to Iraq's general needs, and internal issues that are governed by the provisions of the Iraqi Constitution and our established laws. For that reason, Iraq does not support the recommendations related to the mandate, specifically conflict prevention, the empowerment of women and minorities, and relations between the central Government and the Kurdistan Government. Those recommendations come under the purview of the Iraqi Government, its constitutional authorities and its internal affairs.

Iraq was not in a state of conflict. It was a war that Iraq waged against an international terrorist organization whose members come from 120 different States Members of the United Nations, some of which have helped to finance them. We believe that national reconciliation should be comprehensive and not limited to a particular ethnic or religious sector to the detriment of another. Rather, it should encompass every sector of society while respecting the Constitution, legal and judicial system and Iraqi unity.

With regard to the empowerment of women, the Iraqi Constitution accords women all rights and ensures their representation in Parliament, where they hold 25 per cent of seats. In accordance with resolution 1325 (2000), our Council of Ministers has created an ad hoc department for the empowerment of Iraqi women. We have also established a high commission to promote Iraqi women's status that is the national entity involved in international Iraqi commitments to issues concerning the empowerment of women, and in follow up with the relevant national parties. The official authorities work with international organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and others, to establish small enterprises for women and boost their participation in economic and political life. They issue recommendations to improve the legal and economic status of women in Iraq and to provide assistance to Iraqi women through the social care system which is financed from the general budget.

Iraq does not support any UNAMI mandate related to what the report calls "minorities". Our Constitution identifies such groups as integral components because we are racially and religiously a diversified country. All of our constitutionally recognized components make up the distinct Iraqi identity. The groups of the Iraqi components — including Christians, Yazidis, Shabaks, Sabaean, Feylis, Sunnis and Shiites of Arab, Kurdish or Turkmen origin — are indigenous peoples that have built the Iraqi civilization. They are represented in the general elected Government, which consists of all components and cares for all specificities. This Government, since its establishment and under the aegis of Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi, has sought to unite the Iraqi people and to ensure their safety and a decent life on the basis of the rule of law.

Our Government also aspires to rebuild all of our country's cities so as to enable its components to live in harmony together after being liberated from terrorism. In this regard, Iraq appreciates the role of the United Nations agencies working in Iraq, especially the United Nations Development Programme, which, alongside the relevant Iraqi ministries and authorities, delivers effective assistance to all liberated areas, thereby enabling an equal delivery of assistance so as to avoid discrimination. That also helps to foster hope for the residents of the liberated areas, all of whom suffered from the crimes committed by Da'esh.

The Iraqi Government, with the assistance of partners and international organizations, has managed to implement programmes for the return of refugees expelled by Da'esh terrorist factions. They are now able to return to the liberated cities. The Government has established an integrated programme to achieve

stability, deliver necessary services and preserve religious and ethnic diversity in those cities, while securing the State's exclusive right to possess weapons. We call on the international community to contribute to rebuilding the cities that have been destroyed. We commend the continued commitment of the European Union to assisting Iraq in the short and long terms by adopting a special strategy to meet Iraq's current needs.

The delegation of my country appreciates the efforts of the Secretariat to honour the requests of the Independent High Electoral Commission in Iraq and deliver assistance to strengthen our national capacity. The Iraqi Council of Representatives has set forth a timetable for elections to be held on 12 May, seeking to ensure that it will be a historic day for a modern Iraq in which Iraqi people participate in the legislative election process.

In order to build on the democratic political process, the Iraqi Government intends to ensure the participation of internally displaced persons in the upcoming parliamentary elections by securing protection for all voters and guaranteeing the transparent outcome of the elections so that they will be deemed successful and contribute to entrenching democracy and the peaceful exchange of power.

My delegation thanks the State of sisterly Kuwait for the efforts it has undertaken with the World Bank and the European Union, as well as the United Nations in Iraq, in preparation to host the Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq, which was held in Kuwait from 12 to 14 February. Iraq places great hope on the outcome of that Conference and its implementation mechanisms. We are grateful to all States that attended. The goals of the Conference pertained to investments and development, based on studies that assess the damage wrought in Iraq with respect to infrastructure and the delivery of basic services.

The Government of Iraq reaffirms its commitment to undertaking greater efforts in order to make progress on the matters of the disappeared Kuwaiti citizens and Kuwaiti archives. Our national and joint commissions are sparing no effort to determine the fate of the disappeared Kuwaiti persons and others. The Ministry of Defence, in conjunction with the International Committee of the Red Cross in Baghdad, has been conducting field investigations in Shakhat and 'Ayn Tamr in Karbala, Salman Pak in Baghdad, Khamisiyah in Dhi Qar, Salman Road in Al-Muthanna, Al-Razi Street in Diali and other places. It holds regular meetings on a quarterly basis with the participation of UNAMI to inform all stakeholders about recent developments. The Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Defence are also stepping up efforts and are engaged in media campaigns and field visits to find new witnesses and collect new information to achieve tangible results and identify the whereabouts of Kuwaiti detained and missing persons, including Kuwaiti materials and records to be returned to Kuwait.

To conclude, we thank Mr. Ján Kubiš, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and his team for advising the Iraqi Government and conducting the activities of the Mission with a view to achieving a united and stable Iraq, free from terrorism. I also thank the Deputy Special Representative of UNAMI, Ms. Lise Grande, and we wish her every success.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.